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ABOUT SNAKES.

Pythons and Anacondas--Snakes' Eggs and How They Are Hatched--Rattlesnakes as Food for Human Stomachs--Adventures With Reptiles.

There was brought to the *Star* office by Mr. G. O. Starr yesterday an enormous egg. It was twice the size of a goose-egg, but was not as regular in shape. The outer covering, instead of being hard and brittle like a shell, was so soft that it could be easily indented by the finger. This singular egg was cold and clammy to the touch, and it gave a person who handled it an uncomfortable feeling like that which would result from contact with a snake, toad or frog.

"This egg," said Mr. Starr, "was laid by the three-hundred-pound python which was brought to this city by Mr. G. B. Bunnell a few days ago. The python is sitting upon a nest full of such eggs, and in a short time a lot of little snakes will be hatched out. They will be nice pets for people who have an admiration for reptiles. The mothersnake is twenty-five feet in length, and she is coiled upon her nest and patiently awaiting the advent of her young. Her temper is just like that of a setting hen. She is very ugly, and if she is disturbed she manifests her displeasure in a way that gives all meddlers to understand that she wishes to be let severely alone."

"What shall I do with this thing?" was the inquiry made by the representative of the *Star*, to whom the python's egg was handed.

"You can have it hatched artificially," was the reply of the donor. "Just keep it in cotton in a place which is neither too warm nor too cold, and the first thing you know you will be the owner of a real, live python. Then if you take proper care of the young snake, it will grow so large that it will be able to coil about you and crush you in its vice-like folds."

Mr. W. A. Conkling, Superintendent of the Central Park Menagerie, speaking of reptiles, said: "There is scarcely any animal that commands so much aversion as the serpent, and yet, in spite of this, it is one of the most interesting of all that come before the naturalist. Yet little attention has been paid to the snake, as compared to others of the animal kingdom. The ancient writers speak in respectful tones of serpents of size and power. Aristotle tells of the immense Lyban serpents, so large that they pursued and upset some of the voyagers' boats that visited that coast. The story of the gigantic snake that threw the army of Regulus into disorder by killing and devouring several of his soldiers, and squeezing a few hundred to death in his folds, will be remembered. Regulus finally killed the monster by aid of the engines used to assault fortified places. The skin of this python was 120 feet in length, and for years adorned one of the temples of Rome."

Mr. Conkling added: "The story that snakes cover their prey with saliva is an error. Sir Robert Ker Porter says the python does not first cover its prey with saliva. The mucus does not pour out of the glands unless the prey is large and it is required to lubricate the jaws and throat for the seemingly disproportionate feast. Pythons will cling by the tail to some tree growing in the water, and then float upon the surface and wait for animals that may come to the water to quench their thirst. They often feed upon each other. In the Zoological Gardens in London, one who had lived for years on friendly terms with a brother nearly as large as himself, was found one morning sole tenant of his den. As the cage was secure, the keeper was puzzled to know how the serpent had escaped. At last it was discovered that the remaining inmate had swollen remarkably during the night, when the truth came out. But if you get a good up and down snake story, let me introduce you to Prof. Hutchings."

"Can I tell you anything about snakes? I should say so," said the Rev. Mr. Hutchings, lightning calculator and lecturer upon Bunnell's wonders. "Sir! I could tell you facts, sir--facts in relation to the betrayer of our common mother that would overwhelm you with amazement. I remember one in the year 1864. I was at Gilbert's Museum, Market, near Second, San Francisco, Cal. Fifty in gold and all expenses. Those were glorious days; gold way up, and myself generally in a like condition. I noticed for several days a man they called Reynolds hanging about the place. He was a man about fifty, no taller than myself, gray locks hanging over his shoulders. A bent form like a tree that had been brought up wrong. Eyes with a far-away look. He had a peculiar gliding motion, and his feet, muffled in slippers, gave forth no more sound than the reptile. Shortly after I noticed the proprietor advertised for snakes. One day a mountaineer came in with a box pierced with air-holes. From the inside came a sound like unto the rattle of musketry."

"What yer got, stranger?" said Reynolds, pushing through the crowd.
"Rattles," said the mountaineer.
"Let me take one," said Reynolds, reaching for the box.
"Better look out; they bite, and when they bite they kill," was the reply.

"If yer brought these in answer to the advertisement them's my snakes," said Reynolds, as he plunged his hand into the box. In a second he brought forth a six-foot rattlesnake, and holding it between a thumb and finger looked at it. The far-away look in the eyes of the mysterious man had given way to a dancing, sparkling brilliancy, before which the snake was powerless.

"Ain't he purty? See the sun strike its handsome hide and cum back in rainbow colors. Kiss me, boy."

"Slowly the deadly serpent went towards his mouth, and then darted down his throat. The crowd did not move; they scarcely breathed. I felt my hair rising; I might say, in New Haven slang: 'We were paralyzed.' At all events, we were rooted to the spot as firmly as the Pyramids are to Egypt's sand. In an instant his hands were in the box, and no less than twenty of these deadly animals were dancing around him to the music of their rattles. The mountaineer was pale as a sheet, and trembled as with the ague. Back went the snakes into the box. Turning to the mountaineer, Reynolds exclaimed: 'What's the matter; are ye cold?' His voice broke the spell; the mountaineer gave one look, and then made for the door. He never came for pay for those snakes."

Among the visitors to see the enormous 300-pound python on exhibition there was a native of Central America. He told the attendant at the door that a long residence in a warm climate had made him perfectly familiar with reptiles and their habits. He acknowledged that the python in the museum was a wonderful serpent, but he said he had seen many such in Guatemala. A representative of the *Star*, who happened to come along just then and overheard the Central American's remarks, asked him to relate some of his experiences with snakes. The man was a veteran of sixty-five or seventy years. His face was bronzed, and his hair, which he wore long, was as straight as that of an Indian. He was full six feet tall; and the lankness of his figure gave him a singular appearance. He told the reporter that his name was Senor Jose Dece, that he was born in Mexico, and left that country for Central America when a young man. The Senor was well educated, and is able to speak in the English language with the same fluency that he does in his native tongue. He said:

"I have camped in swamps and thickets, and slept with pythons and anacondas crawling all about me. I never thought of being afraid of them. The stories told in books of immense snakes attacking large animals and men, coiling about them and crushing and swallowing their prey, are for the most part exaggerations. It is true that small animals are often killed and swallowed whole by anacondas and boa-constrictors; but it is safe to say that no full-grown man was ever made a meal of by a serpent."

"Were you ever attacked by a serpent?" the reporter asked.

"I never had one tackle me, but a sailor with whom I was acquainted had a pretty severe experience. He was walking in a thicket on one moonlight night, twenty-five or thirty years ago, when he suddenly found himself encircled with the folds of a tremendous snake. I suppose he would have drawn a knife from his pocket and cut the reptile in two, but unfortunately for him he did not happen to have any cutting instrument with him at the time. So all that was left for him to do was to struggle and free himself the best way he could. He made a desperate effort and loosened himself from what was a very close embrace. Once free, he procured a stick and pounded the anaconda upon its head until it was dead. There is a certain spot at the base of a snake's head which, if struck even a slight blow, will cause death."

"Is an anaconda good for human food?"

"Now, that is a question which is very hard to answer. It may be wholesome, but I think it would be pretty tough eating for any human being who has an ordinary set of teeth and the average digestion. I think I would prefer good beefsteak or a tenderloin if I wanted a good square meal."

"Is any kind of snake suitable for food?"

"O, yes; rattlesnakes are delicious and wholesome. I have been in countries where they formed a large share of the regular diet of the inhabitants."

"To what countries do you refer?"

"Well, sir, the people of Brazil and Chili eat rattlesnakes; but you need not go so far away from New York to find serpent-eaters. The folks down in the northern part of the State of Pennsylvania eat rattlesnakes. The serpents in that State are particularly plump, and exceedingly inviting to the palate of an epicure. According to the orthodox method, the rattler is skinned and cut up into pieces, about an inch or an inch and a half long, and then fried the same as you would cook an eel. I have eaten rattlers lots of times. They taste something like eels, only a great deal sweeter. I prefer rattlesnakes to frogs any day in the week. Frogs are insipid."

"Did you ever see a pyramid of snakes?"

"If you mean one of those conical piles of reptiles, such as Livingston saw in Africa, I will tell you that I never saw a pyramid; but I have seen a heap or big knots of serpents all twisted and intertwined in a wriggling, squirming, slimy, hissing bunch. I was exploring a cave in South America a few years ago, when I came to a passage that was so low and narrow that I was compelled to get down and crawl upon my hands and knees. I had to hold my torch in my teeth, and, as I could not manage it very well, my light was extinguished, and my only alternative was to grope along in darkness. Suddenly I felt something cold and slimy against my hands. I knew from the feeling that I had touched a snake. Then I blindly put my hands forward and thrust them into a nest of serpents. You can believe that I got out of that place as speedily as possible."--N. Y. *Star*.

The Arctic Fascination.

There is something about the solemn fascination of Arctic voyages that none but they who have made them can comprehend. Even when those expeditions end in the disaster which almost invariably attends them, the adventurers are no sooner recovered in body and mind from their afflictions than they are ready and sometimes eager to essay once more the stern, solemn mystery which the ice barrier of the pole guard with such pitiless jealousy. A correspondent, who interviewed Danenhower immediately after his return to New York, found him in what might be called a pitiable condition. The prolonged sufferings and privations he had undergone, the remembrance of the loss of the gallant ship crushed in the ice, and of the mournful fate of his companions, and, more than all, the sudden transfer from the desolate wastes and overpowering loneliness of the Polar region to the warmth and light and life of New York civilization in the month of May, had so unsettled his mind that he was unable to control his thoughts and actions. Even memory had left a portion of its powers behind in the cold, dreary region from which he had escaped, and in the course of conversation the dazed adventurer would halt and grope for the forgotten word to express himself in. "Oh," said he, "I can't find the word I want; that Arctic nightmare is still on me." And yet when asked if he would like to join another expedition to the dismal region, he instantly answered, "yes."

We may bewail the loss of so many gallant spirits and stout vessels that have perished in the search for this yet unsolved mystery, and rebuke the daring which seeks to tear from the icy heart of the pole a secret which, when brought to view, would probably be absolutely destitute of all practical value; but lamentations and rebuke will be of no avail as long as this unaccountable fascination holds its spell upon the minds of hardy navigators. That insatiable thirst for knowledge which animates the microscopist in his search for the ultimate atom, the chemist in his pursuit of the vital force, the astronomer in his analysis of ghostly nebulae, the African traveler in his hunt for the source of the Nile, and the archaeologist in his ceaseless questionings of the dumb tumuli beneath which repose the relics of past civilizations will, no doubt, draw victims to the Arctic sepulchre as long as the mystery of the pole remains."--*St. Louis Republican*.

The Human Roadway.

At the close of one of the great religious festivals of the Moslem year a number of Arabs are seen to detach themselves from the crowd and to lie down side by side in the dust, face downward, like logs upon a "corduroy" road, while their friends, crowding around them, press down an arm here and there, in order to make this living pavement as compact as possible. When all is ready the crowd falls back, while a horseman coming up from behind passes at a quick walk over the prostrate bodies. This is called the *Dosoh*, or "trampling." Each man receives the full pressure of the iron-shod hoof in the small of his back, and not a few may be seen to writhe under it like trodden worms. The moment this horrible pageant is over the friends and relatives of the trampled men rush up to them and do their utmost to make it appear that they have received no injury from the pressure. The odious farce, however, is always unsuccessful, the groans and writhings of the sufferers being a very sufficient evidence to the contrary. The whole spectacle is revolting in the extreme, but deserves attention as striking proof of the lengths to which superstition and fanaticism can go, even in an age of highly developed civilization.

"A Coney Island horse-jockey who died the other day confessed to having participated in thirteen 'put-up' races where it was arranged beforehand which horse was to win."

WIT AND WISDOM.

"Never run in debt for what you cannot pay for to-morrow."

"At the West Point review the other day General Howard had his hat on his side before. Perhaps he is coming out with a new style of tactics."--*Durington Hawkeye*.

"There is no antidote for the poison used by the Carribean Indians on their arrows. If you want to be safe have a *Poison* shoot you with a bullet."--*Detroit Free Press*.

"Where are we going this summer? Paraguay, dear reader, Paraguay. That is the country where you are expected to kiss every woman to whom you're introduced."--*Lowell Citizen*.

"So Garibaldi is dead," said an Omaha girl yesterday. "I remember his name perfectly because he invented those Garibaldi waists we used to wear a few years ago." There is nothing exactly like fame."--*Chicago Tribune*.

"Deacon Jenkins was yesterday threatened with a severe attack of concussion of the spine, but is now out of danger," was the way the editor stated that the deacon got over the fence in time to escape the old ram."--*Boston Post*.

"The Boston Transcript is sad once more. It remarks: 'It is now affirmed that poor digestion is caused by weak eyes. And we had always supposed just the opposite, namely, that dyspeptics were generally people with eyes bigger than their stomachs.'"

"Don't carry a million sovereigns in your pockets for fifteen years. In that time, we are told, they will lose in weight, by wear and tear, one-half of one per cent., or about \$25,000, and this sum is an important item at the present price of beef."--*Norristown Herald*.

"A gentleman is a rarer thing than some of us think for. Which of us can point out many such in his circle--men who are generous, whose truth is constant and elevated, who can look the world honestly in the face with an equal, manly sympathy for the great and the small? We all know a hundred whose coats are well made, and a score who have excellent manners, but of gentlemen, how many? Let us take a little scrap of paper and each make his list."--*Tackcray*.

"I have one of the best pianos in the world; it was made to order for me. I have had it ten years, and it has only been tuned three times since, and it is in pretty fair tune now; try it," she said, as she opened the lid. "Now, how often ought a piano to be tuned?" "Well, madam, that depends on what kind of a piano it is, what sort of care is taken of it, and who uses it. An artist has his piano tuned every time he uses it, professional people every time it needs it, purchasers of first-class instruments three or four times a year, and people with sole-leather ears, never."--*Music*.

The Sting of the Bee.

If we press the abdomen of a bee or wasp, so as to cause the sting to protrude, we should naturally think that the sharp, dark-colored instrument was the sting itself. This, however, is not the case. The real sting is a very slender instrument, nearly transparent, keenly pointed, and armed on one edge with a row of barbs. So exactly does the sting resemble the many barbed arrow of certain savage tribes that, if the savages had possessed microscopes, we should certainly have thought that they borrowed the idea of the barb from the insect. What we see with the unaided eye is simply the sheath of the sting. Many savages poison their spears and arrows, and here also they have been anticipated by the insect. But the sting is infinitely superior to the arrow poison. No poison that has yet been made, not even the terrible wourali, or curare, as it is sometimes called, can retain its strength after long exposure to air. The opas poison of Borneo, for example, loses its potency in two or three hours. But the venom of the sting is never exposed to the air at all. It is secreted by two long, thread-like glands, not nearly so thick as a human hair, and is then received into a little bag at the base of the sting. When the insect uses its weapon it contracts the abdomen, thereby forcing the sting out and compressing the venom-bag. By the force of the stroke which drives the sting into the foe its base is pressed against the venom-bag and a small amount of the poison driven into the wound. As a rule, if the bee or wasp be allowed to remain quiet, it will withdraw its sting, but as the pain generally causes a sudden jerk, the barbed weapon can not be withdrawn, and the whole apparatus of sting, poison-bag, and glands is torn out of the insect, thereby causing its death."--*Good Words*.

"A species of cactus is made useful in Florida. The strong fiber of the leaves is turned into rope, its juice into a pleasant beverage, and its trunk, after the removal of the pith, into rails."

Time.

Human ingenuity cannot make time. It can only invent methods of measuring the hours and minutes as they pass. When the earth was young, shadows cast by sun-beams noted the passing hours. From these sprang the sun-dial, which answered while the sun shone, but failed while the sky was cloudy. Then water-clocks, or clepsydrae, as they are technically known, came into use. By these, Athenian orators were wont to time their speeches two thousand years ago. After the water-clock came the hour-glass of running sand, and for three hundred years this was the common method of measuring time. Even fifty years ago it was employed in churches to inform "the elder" when he had preached enough. Meantime, various rude forms of clocks had been constructed, but none of much use. Not until the invention of the pendulum in the middle of the seventeenth century, and its application to clocks, did they become reliable. The clocks and watches of today are so numerous and cheap, that nearly every school-boy can afford to carry a "time-piece." Yet all the clocks and watches in the world cannot tell the time of day unless regulated with the sun. They merely show the amount of passing time. The sun shows what time it is, whether morning, noon or night.

Strange mistakes are often made by relying solely on clock-time. A party of travelers, not long ago, were on their way west through Arizona. Arriving at Yuma at eight o'clock, railroad time, they were surprised to find the dining-room clock indicating an hour earlier. Still more were they surprised, after having leisurely eaten breakfast, to learn on embarking again, that it was but six o'clock. Strange, they thought; arrive at eight; breakfast at seven; and leave at six! Two hours gain! But the clocks were right. The first kept Jefferson City, Mo., time; the second was Yuma time; and the last was San Francisco time.

Places east and west of each other cannot have the same time. Only those directly north and south are thus favored. Could a man continually travel around the earth, keeping with the sun, he might live his allotted space of "three score years and ten" within a single day, for the sun would never rise or set to him. It would always be day. Yet even then he could not make time. He could not prolong his life, nor give to the world more hours. The only way to make time is to make use of it, every moment as it comes. Time once gone is time gone forever, whether the clock says so or not."--*Youth's Companion*.

"A woman of Stockton, Cal., believing that she was about to die, confessed to her husband that she did not love him, but had centered her affections on a neighbor. She declared that she could not die unforgiven, and so the husband freely forgave her. But he granted the favor only in view of her speedy death, and, when she unexpectedly recovered, he began a suit for divorce. Her defense is that he condoned her fault by the forgiveness, and a peculiar question of law is raised."--*N. Y. Herald*.

"Two men fell from a broken scaffold in New York, recently, a distance of seventy feet. One struck head downward on the flag stone, dashing his brains out. The other went through a wooden packing box, making a round hole in it, and sustaining terrible injuries from which he was expected to die. A third man saved himself by clinging to a window-sill and clambering in."

"A clerk of a Mississippi River boat has given the Cincinnati Zoological Garden a young bear, and the marine reporter of the *St. Louis Republican* has dedicated the animal in the following stanza:

Do to others as you would
That they should do to you;
So Albert gives his little bear
To the Cincinnati Zoo.

"Of the Yale class of 1832 no fewer than seventy-two confess that they drink intoxicating liquors, sixty-seven smoke, fifty-seven bet, forty gamble and fifty-two swear. Fourteen of the class are engaged to be married."--*N. Y. Sun*.

"Georgia has probably the smallest foreign-born population of any State, only 10,564 out of 1,542,000 total; she probably has also the largest per cent. native to her own soil, over 1,400,000."

"A Nevada lover, learning that death loved a shining mark, gave his rival a diamond pin, which caught the girl, and now the fellow wants to know 'who makes up them goldarned things in the papers.'"--*Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

"A Missouri tree has yielded 800 rails, 300 fence-posts, ten cords of wood, twelve squirrels and one raccoon. It is supposed to have been 300 years old."--*Courier-Journal*.